

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-15 SSO-00 PM-05 EB-08 /041 W
-----057693 271519Z /43

O 271415Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY OSLO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5154

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 OSLO 0480

FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY VEST FROM AMBASSADOR LERNER

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS, MPOL, NO
SUBJ: THE MISSING LINK

1. VIRTUALLY SINCE MY ARRIVAL IN AUGUST OF 1977, I HAVE BEEN ALTERNATELY AGGREGATED AND ANNOYED OVER THE ALMOST TOTAL DISREGARD FOR ME AND THIS EMBASSY EVIDENCED BY THE DOD F-16 MOGULS. PRACTICALLY OUR ONLY SOURCES FOR INFORMATION ON THE VARIOUS TWISTS AND TURNS THE CONSORTIUM HAS TAKEN, HAVE BEEN THE NORWEGIAN GOVERNMENT AND THE MAJOR CONTRACTORS, NONE OF WHOM ARE EXACTLY DISINTERESTED OBSERVERS. I HAVE MADE THIS POINT, WITH A DRAMATIC LACK OF RESULT, TO EVERY USG VISITOR WITH A POSSIBLE F-16 CONNECTION.

2. THE LATEST EPISODE, HOWEVER, THE FISH F-16 MISSION TO NORWAY NOT ONLY IS THE PERFECT EXAMPLE OF THE COMMUNICATIONS GAP BETWEEN THE USG AND ITS REPRESENTATIVE IN NORWAY BUT IS ALSO THE STRAW THAT BROKE THIS AMBASSADOR'S BACK. LET ME REVIEW THE SEQUENCE OF EVENTS WITH REFERENCE TO NORWAY AND THIRD COUNTRY SALES TO ILLUSTRATE WHAT I MEAN:

--- ON AUGUST 26, 1977 (OSLO 3866) WE ALERTED WASHINGTON TO THE PROBLEMS INVOLVED IN NORWEGIAN PARTICIPATION IN THIRD COUNTRY SALES OUTSIDE OF NATO BUYERS.

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---- ON SEPTEMBER 28, 1977 (OSLO 4438) WE REPORTED THAT THE ISSUE OF THIRD COUNTRY SALES HAD SURFACED IN THE PRESS WITH THE PREDICTABLE DEBATE.

--- ON NOVEMBER 21, 1977 WE INFORMED THE DEPARTMENT BY TELEPHONE, THAT MFA UNDER SECRETARY WISHED TO COME TO WASHINGTON TO DISCUSS F-16 RELATED PROBLEMS.

--- ON NOVEMBER 26, 1977 WE TRANSMITTED STOLTENBERG'S PERSONAL MEMO LISTING HIS CONCERNS, PRESENTED AN ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDED A GENTLE TURNDOWN (OSLO 5325) BASED ON OUR READING OF USG POLICY.

--- ON DECEMBER 6, 1977 (OSLO 5460) WE REPORTED STOLTENBERG'S INQUIRY AS TO WHETHER WE HAD HEARD FROM WASHINGTON. WE HAD NOT.

--- ON DECEMBER 12, 1977 WE WERE ABLE TO INFORM STOLTENBERG THAT MEETINGS HAD BEEN ARRANGED FOR DECEMBER 14 AND 15.

--- ON DECEMBER 16 1977 WE WERE STUNNED TO READ (STATE 300115) THAT DURING STOLTENBERG'S CALL ON YOU HE HAD EXPRESSED HIMSELF AS "... VERY PLEASED WITH THE OUTCOME OF HIS DECEMBER 14 DISCUSSIONS AT DEFENSE."

--- ON DECEMBER 20, 1977 (STATE 302790) WE READ THE REPORTING CABLE ON STOLTENBERG'S DECEMBER 14 CALL AT DEFENSE AND UNDERSTOOD: DOD HAD TAKEN A MUCH MORE COOPERATIVE LINE THAN WE HAD EVER HAD REASON TO BELIEVE THEY WOULD. IN EFFECT, A DEAL HAD BEEN OFFERED, AND ACCEPTED BY STOLTENBERG ON THE BASIS OF A TELEPHONE CONVERSTATION WITH THE GON, WHICH WAS NEVER COMMUNICATED TO US.

--- ON DECEMBER 29, 1977 WE DEVINED FROM A SECDEF MESSAGE (292238Z DEC 77) REQUESTING COUNTRY CLEARANCE THAT CONFIDENTIAL

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GENERAL FISH WAS COMING TO NORWAY. SUBSEQUENT INFORMAL INQUIRES PRODUCED CONFLICTING ACCOUNTS OF HIS PLANS.

--- FINALLY, ON JANUARY 16 WE HEARD FROM MFA THAT GENERAL FISH WAS BEARING A LETTER TO STOLTENBERG THAT CONTAINED THE TEXT OF THE USG ANNOUNCEMENT ON ITS ACCOMMODATION WITH NORWAY ON THIRD COUNTRY SALES. NEEDLESS TO SAY, I HAD NEVER SEEN IT.

--- ON JANUARY 19, 1977 THE LETTER WAS DELIVERED TO STOLTENBERG BY GENERAL FISH, WHO DID GIVE US A COPY. WE ALSO RECEIVED FROM THE MOD A COPY OF JANUARY 12 LETTER FROM RICHARD KEEGAN HEAVILY CAVEATING THE ABILITY OF THE USG TO LIVE UP TO THE SPIRIT OF THE JANUARY 19 FISH LETTER. WE HAD NEVER SEEN THIS IMPORTANT DOCUMENT, EITHER.

--- ON JANUARY 20, 1978 (STATE 015928) WE RECEIVED THE TEST OF THE FISH LETTER.

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-----057770 271519Z /43
O 271415Z JAN 78
FM AMBASSY OSLO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5155

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 OSLO 0480

FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY VEST FROM AMBASSADOR LERNER

--- ON JANUARY 20, 1978 (OSLO 0363) WE NOTIFIED WASHINGTON
THAT STOLTENBERG PLANNED TO BRIEF THE PARLIAMENT, THE EPG
AMBASSADORS AND THE PRESS ON JANUARY 24.

--- ON JANUARY 23, 1978 (STATE 017912) WE RECEIVED DEPART-
MENT CONCURRENCE WITH STOLTENBERG'S PLAN.

--- ON JANUARY 24, 1978 (OSLO 0393) WE INFORME
WASHINGTON THAT STOLTENBERG HAD POSTPONED HIS BRIEFING OF THE
EPG AMBASSADORS AND REQUESTED US TO DO THE SAME.

--- LATER ON JANUARY 24, 1978 (OSAF 232200Z JAN 1978)
WE WERE INFORMED BY INFO COPY THAT THE SECRETARY OF THE AIR
FORCE HAD HIMSELF INFORMED THE EPG CHODS ON JANUARY 23, THIS
EFFECTIVELY UPSTAGING STOLTENBERG AND MAKING US LOOK MORE LIKE
FOOLS.

3. I HAVE REVIEWED THIS SEQUENCE OF EVENTS IN SUCH DETAIL TO
UNDERScore THAT THE PROBLEM IS A REAL ONE AND NOT MERELY A
PHANTASM OF OUR SKEWED VISION. THE F-16 CONSORTIUM IS A
MAJOR POLITICAL/ECONOMIC ISSUE IN NORWAY AND AS SUCH ONE
THAT MUST RECEIVE CAREFUL EMBASSY ATTENTION IN ORDER TO PROTECT
US INTERESTS IN BOTH THE LARGER BILATERAL CONTEXT AS WELL
AS THE NARROWER COPRODUCTION. WE CAN NOT DO OUR JOB PROPERLY
WITHOUT A STADY FLOW OF INFORMATION AND, WHEN APPROPRIATE, US
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POLICY GUIDANCE. THE F-16 RECORD, AS ILLUSTRATED BY THE
AUG 77 TO JANUARY 78 EVENTS ABOVE, IS POOR IN THE EXTREME.

4. I WOULD URGE YOU TO LOOK INTO THIS AFFAIR AND SEE IF
ANYTHING CAN BE DONE TO CORRECT THE SITUATION. ANY HELP WOULD
BE MUCH APPRECIATED, BELIEVE ME. I HAVE RAISED IT RECENTLY
WITH AF ASSISTANT SECRETARY MARTIN AND PLAN TO DO SO AGAIN
WITH GENERAL ABRAMSON IN NEXT MONTH. BEST PERSONAL REGARDS,
LOU LERNER.
LERNER

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Message Attributes

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